

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

X-1529

INFORMATION

February 14, 1972

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

MR. KISSINGER

FROM:

JOHN D. NEGROPONTE

SUBJECT:

CIA Memorandum on North Vietnamese Trucks

CIA has forwarded a memorandum on trends relating to NVA use of trucks in North Vietnam and the Laotian Panhandle (Tab A). It makes the following points:

-- The destruction of NVA trucks in the Laotian Panhandle has always been difficult to quantify precisely. Nevertheless it is clear that total truck kills in 1971 were more than double the 1970 total. This was due in a large part to the increased use of the highly effective AC-130 gunships.

-- As a result, the North Vietnamese have increased their truck imports substantially. Aerial photography of NVA truck parks in northern North Vietnam last October revealed the largest number of trucks ever seen. In addition, the North Vietnamese ordered 40 percent more trucks from the USSR for delivery in 1972 than they ever have before. If China and eastern Europe increase their deliveries proportionately, total 1972 truck imports will be at the highest level of the war.

Comment. Of particular interest are the large and uncamouflaged truck parks in northern North Vietnam. Ever since the U.S. halted the bombing of the north in 1968, Hanoi has concentrated its stock of trucks in this area. These parks would make very lucrative targets for air strikes should bombing of specific sites north of the 20th parallel again be authorized. A well targeted strike against a number of these parks could in one day destroy more trucks than is accomplished during a whole month in the Laotian Panhandle, where no more than a few trucks are in the same place

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at the same time. Should such a strike be made, the North Vietnamese might have second thoughts about continuing to shift the bulk of their air defense assets southward as they have been doing for some time now. They might even decide to reinforce their air defense north of the 20th parallel. At the minimum, an air strike on truck parks in the northern DRV would force the NVA to disperse their truck stocks once more as they did prior to 1968, thereby complicating the truck flow southward into the Laotian Panhandle.